



Goa goes all out to sink offshore sector

The Goa government is looking to close all six offshore casinos which it says are operating 'without proper permits'. State minister of port Francisco Pacheco confirmed that the Pride of Goa, The Leela, Casino Royale, San Domingo and the Caravela all moored on the river Mondovi will be closed by the State. The remaining venue, the MV Arablan Sea King, will be closed when its licence expires in October.

Uruguay government to privatise entire sector

The privatisation of the Hotel-Casino Carrasco in Montevideo last year has paved the way for many similar processes the length and breadth of Uruguay, where the government is to privatise its casino interests. **Phil Martin** reports.



The Uruguayan government is to launch public tenders to sell off its interests in 24 state-owned casinos at the end of September, signalling the most aggressive expansion opportunity since the relaunch of Chile's casino sector four years ago.

The move follows on from the award of a 30-year operating licence for the iconic Hotel-Casino Carrasco to French hotel group Sofitel and Spanish casino operator Codere. The group is to invest US \$63m in the complete refurbishment of the Art Deco property to turn it into a 5-star casino hotel and the Uruguayan government wants similar levels of investment to improve its existing facilities.

Harrah's Conrad Punta del Este resort is the only wholly privately-owned casino in the country in operation, although there are a further

seven casinos which are jointly operated by the state and private groups.

The finance ministry's Fernando Nopitsch, head of the Dirección General de Casinos, said that the government had already progressed with its privatisation plans by granting Argentine operator Boldt the licence to run the casino in the city of Rivera, close to the Brazilian border, for US\$20m. The border with Brazil is a hotbed of gaming opportunity due to South America's largest country continuing its stance of no casino gaming. Nopitsch said tenders would be launched for state owned casinos at four towns along the border as well as in the cities of Flores, Florida and Paysandú.

He hopes that a crack-down on illegal slot machines will help attract foreign investment in the casino sector.

The government may also allow investors to



Harrah's Conrad Punta del Este: currently the only privately owned casino in operation

present outlines for new casino projects in luxury four star hotels.

The move to privatise follows the launch of a tender process for 13 slot hall licences.

The emphasis on slots in Uruguay is huge with machine gaming accounting for 91.34 per cent of Gross

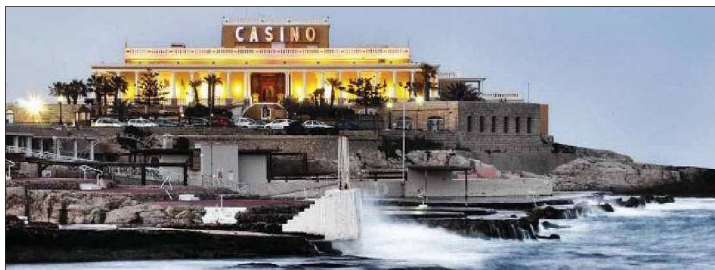
Gaming Revenues with the tables accounting for the remaining 8.66 per cent.

The 13 new licences will include slot halls in the two remaining regional capital cities that don't currently offer slots, namely Florida and Trinidad. Both these will be developed as tourist developments with the

Florida slot hall being developed alongside a convention centre and the Trinidad venture to be housed in a hotel in Parque Andresito. But the projects will be well spread. The slot only venues are also planned for the Gran Hotel Salto and the five-star hotel Arapey Resort, the city of Paysandú, Atlántida,

Colonia, Canelones, Piriápolis, Rocha, Cerro Largo and the Tacuarembó, Riviera.

From 2004-2008, the casinos of the state showed a growth, except in 2006, in which they decreased slightly. The gaming sector grew slightly in 2008, generating US\$151.6m compared to US\$128.1m.



Two operators join Dragonara's owners in casino quest



The Dragonara Casino in Malta has attracted attention from two operators as well as the current owners all charged with enhancing the venue's success within the sector if they were to win out.

Proposals have been received at MIMCOL offices,

submitted by: Dragonara Casino, Tomino and Novomato Peninsula consortium.

"The government also aims to ensure that the Dragonara Casino will provide an upscale and unique gaming experience, backed-up by leading edge gaming equipment and technology and excellent customer service," the gov-

ernment said in a statement.

MIMCOL, acting on behalf of the Government of Malta and Casma Ltd, has this year initiated a competitive tender process for the award of a new 10 year-term concession for the management, operation and development of the business activities of the Dragonara Casino Complex.

Third Hungarian super site gets go ahead



The new super casino sector in Hungary is starting to take shape with a third category one casino being approved.

KC Bidding has been given the licence to operate a E1.5bn tourist complex, including a casino at King's City tourist-complex at Hungary's Lake Velence, on the outskirts of Sukoro.

The 1,500 slot, 100 gaming table project follows on from the granting of similar concessions granted to Hard Rock and Euro Vegas in Bezenye in the North West of the country and Plaza Centers' Dream Island in Budapest

This latest 20-year licence will be located in the Central

Transdanubia region.

The finance ministry launched a tender for the project in February this year with only KC Bidding lodging any interest. The investment group behind the plans are composed of American, Israeli, German and Hungarian businessmen, including Israeli-Hungarian Joav Blum.

There are currently five casinos operating in Hungary, two in Budapest and one each in Sopron, Győr and Kecskemet. The government operates the casinos in Győr and Kecskemet, while the others run on a concession basis. None of the five casinos are category I.

